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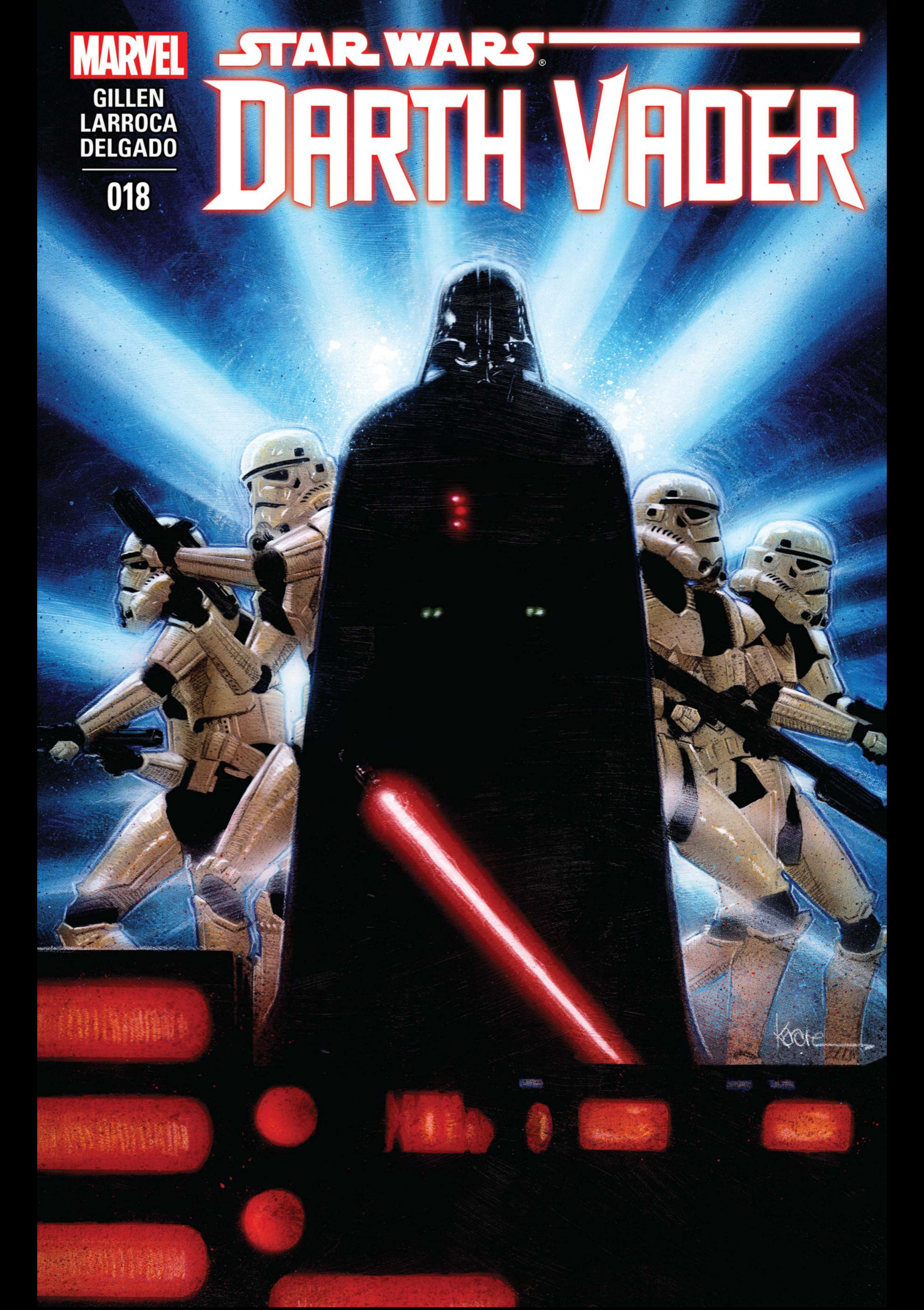
018

STAR WARS® DARTH VADER



Book III, Part III

THE SHU-TORUN WAR

It is a time of chaos for the Empire. After the destruction of the Death Star, Darth Vader is showing no mercy to any rebel sympathizers.

In an effort to regain allegiance from the ore-rich planet, Shu-Torun, Vader has assassinated the royal family and cast the throne to its youngest surviving daughter, the new Queen Trios. Despite the deadly warning, rebel acts continue, requiring further reprimand from the Empire.

Elsewhere, Vader's secret ally, Dr. Aphra, has fallen into the hands of rebels. Vader has issued a bounty for her recovery, dead or alive, prepared to bring an end to any who dare test him. Meanwhile, Shu-Torun has banded together to fight back against Vader's attacks. Hope seems slim, until a new ally surfaces: Cylo....

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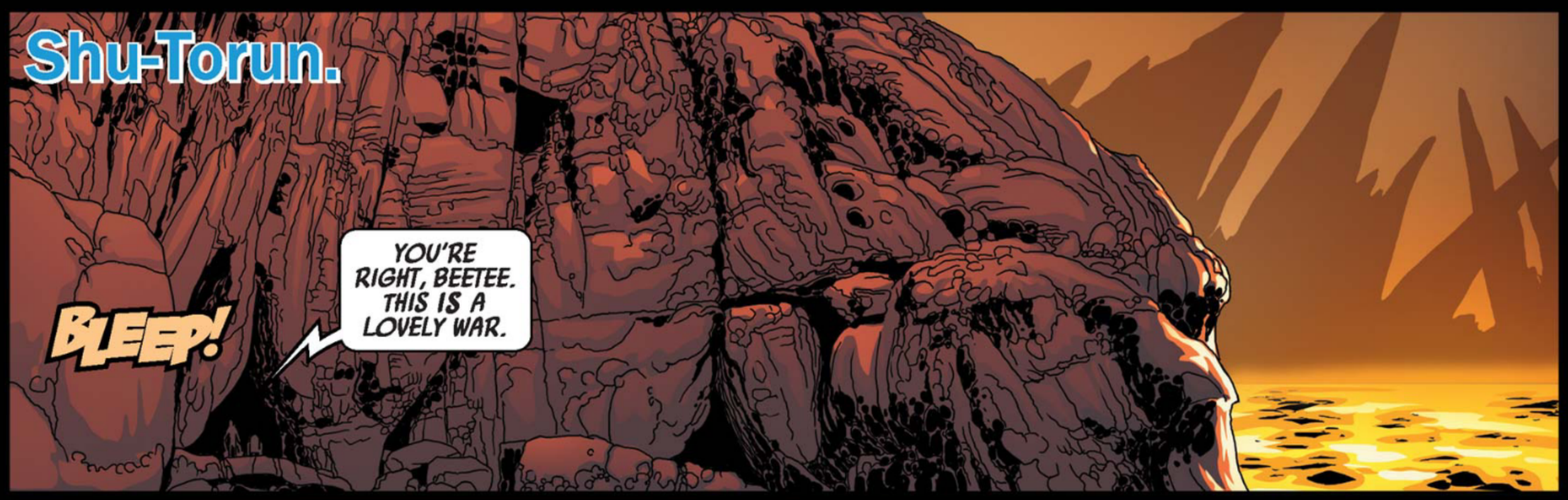
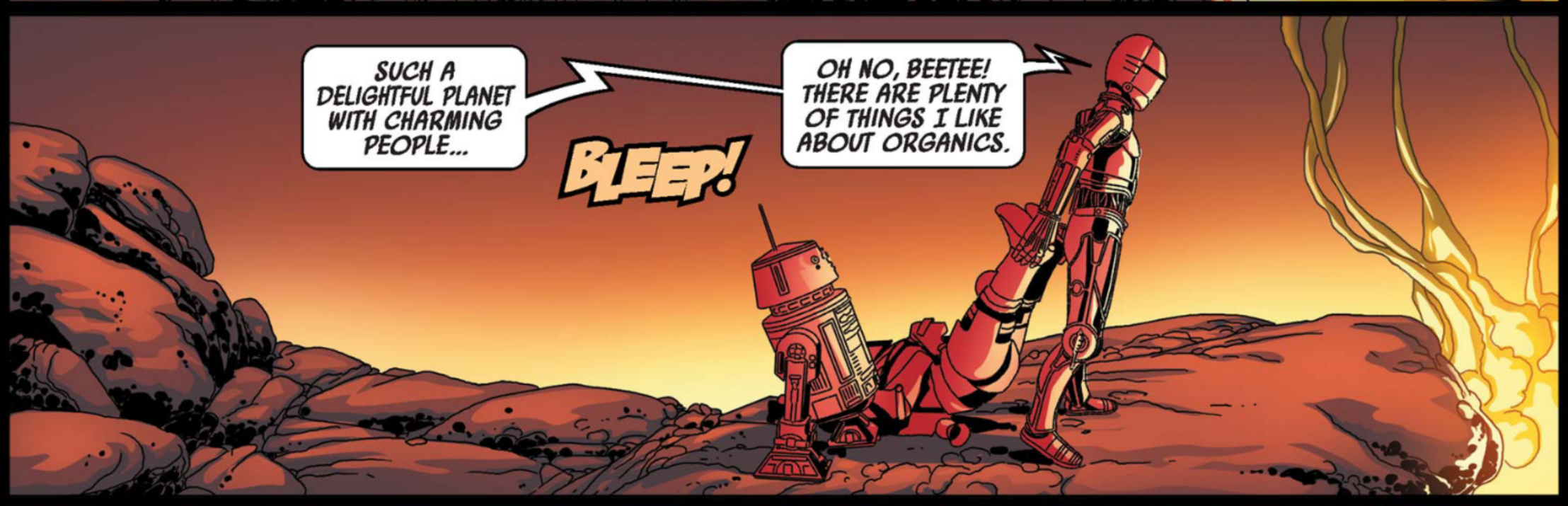
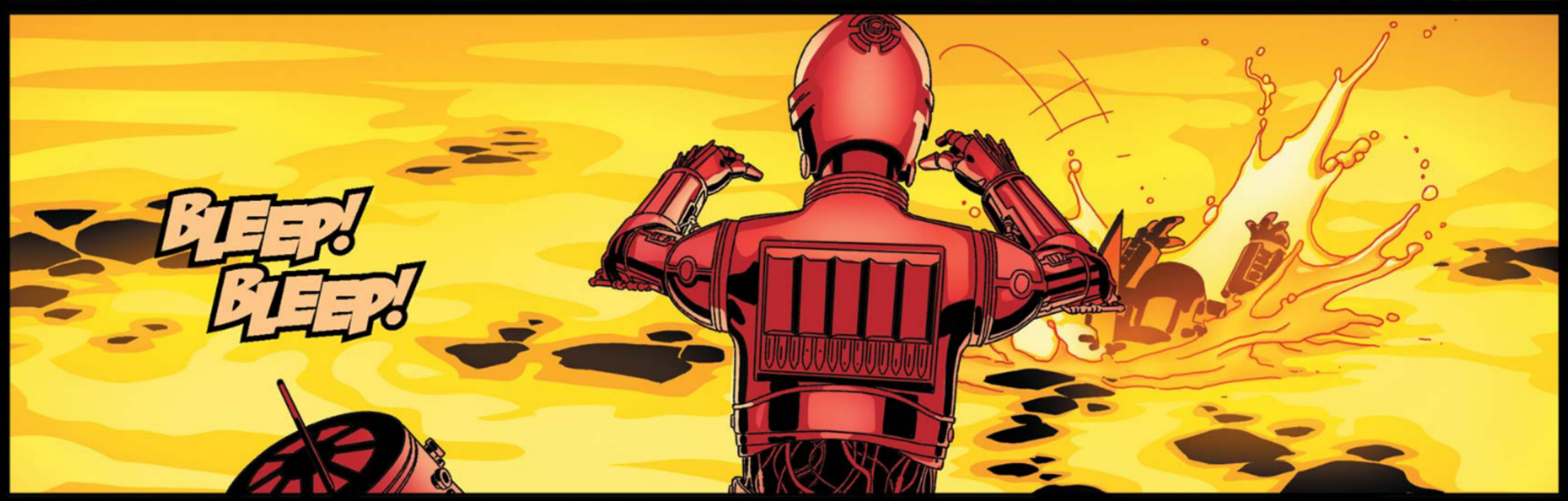
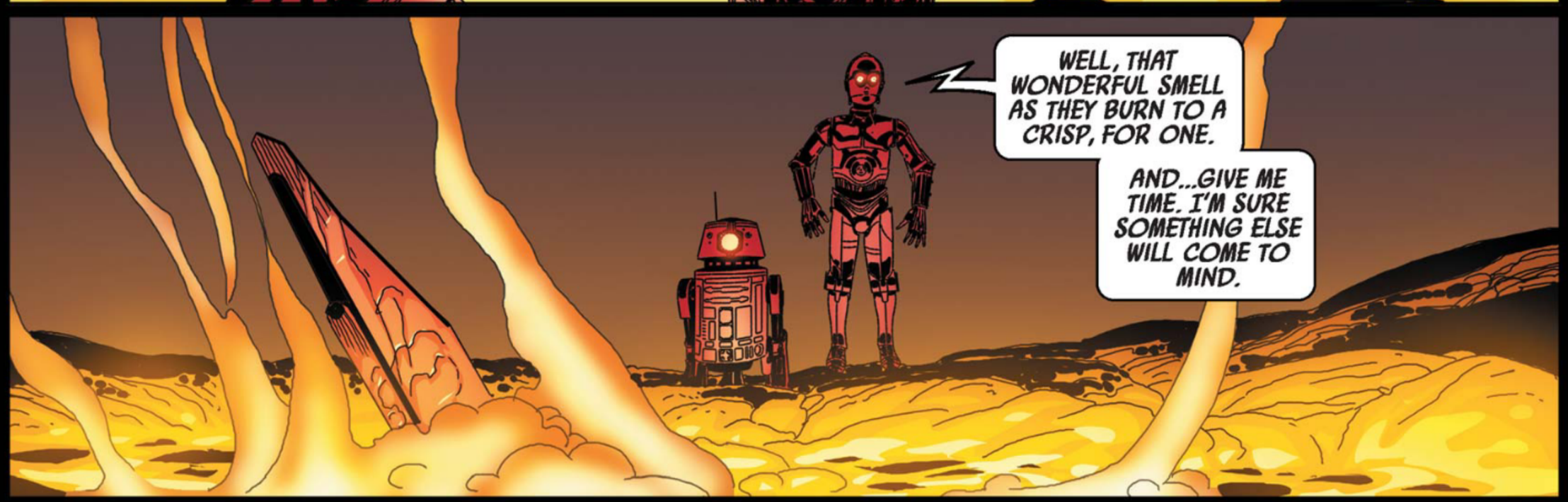
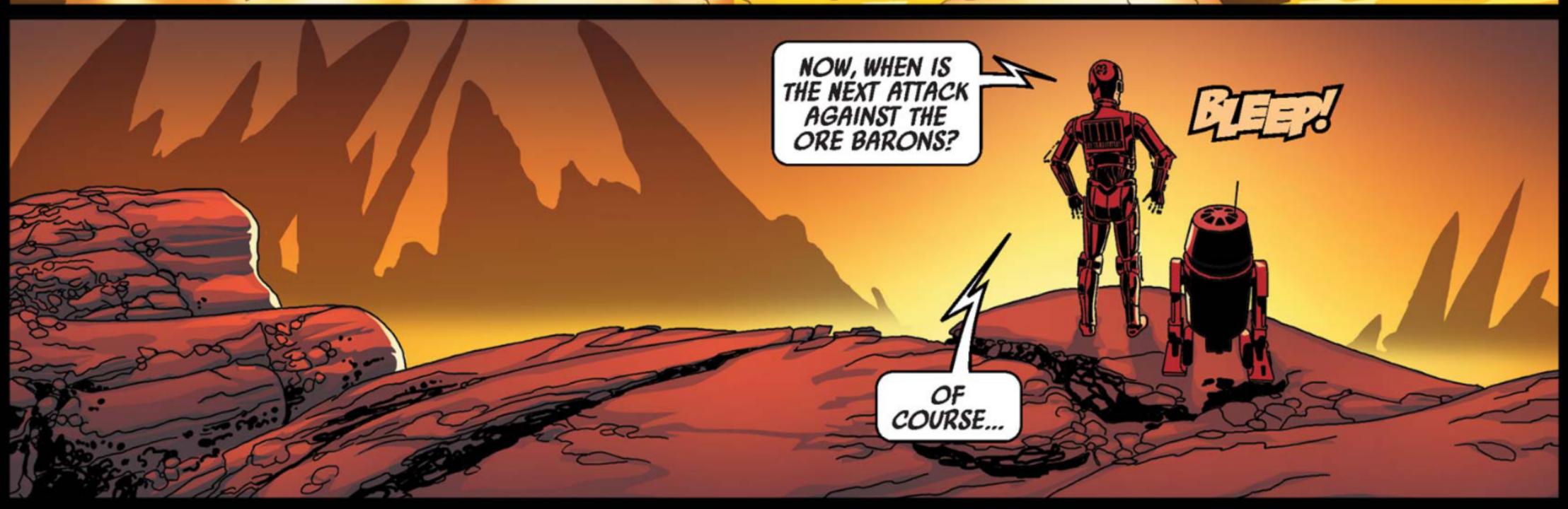

Shu-Torun.
BLEEP!
YOU'RE RIGHT, BEETEE. THIS IS A LOVELY WAR.


SUCH A DELIGHTFUL PLANET WITH CHARMING PEOPLE...
BLEEP!
OH NO, BEETEE! THERE ARE PLENTY OF THINGS I LIKE ABOUT ORGANICS.


BLEEP! BLEEP!

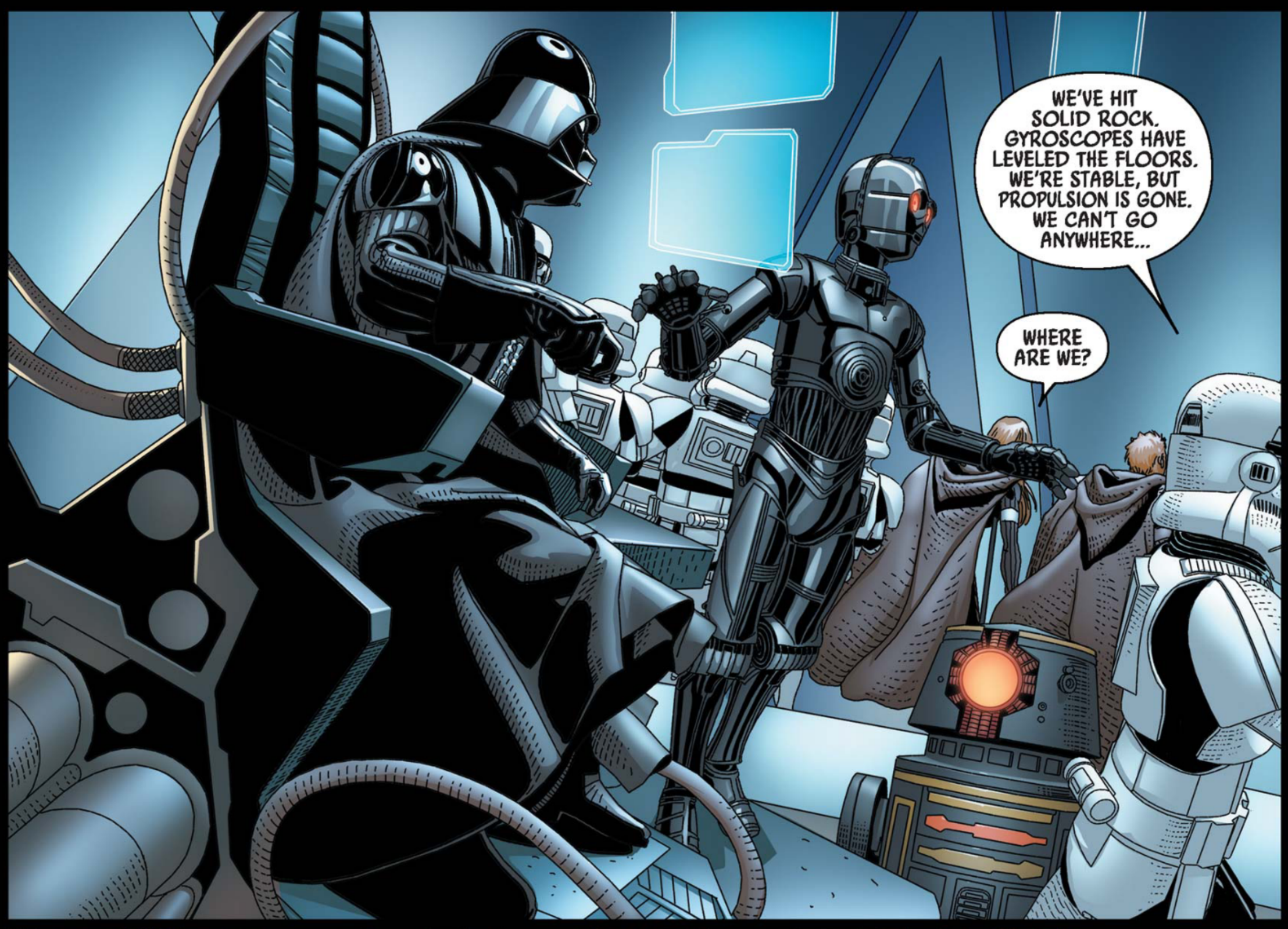

WELL, THAT WONDERFUL SMELL AS THEY BURN TO A CRISP, FOR ONE.
AND...GIVE ME TIME. I'M SURE SOMETHING ELSE WILL COME TO MIND.

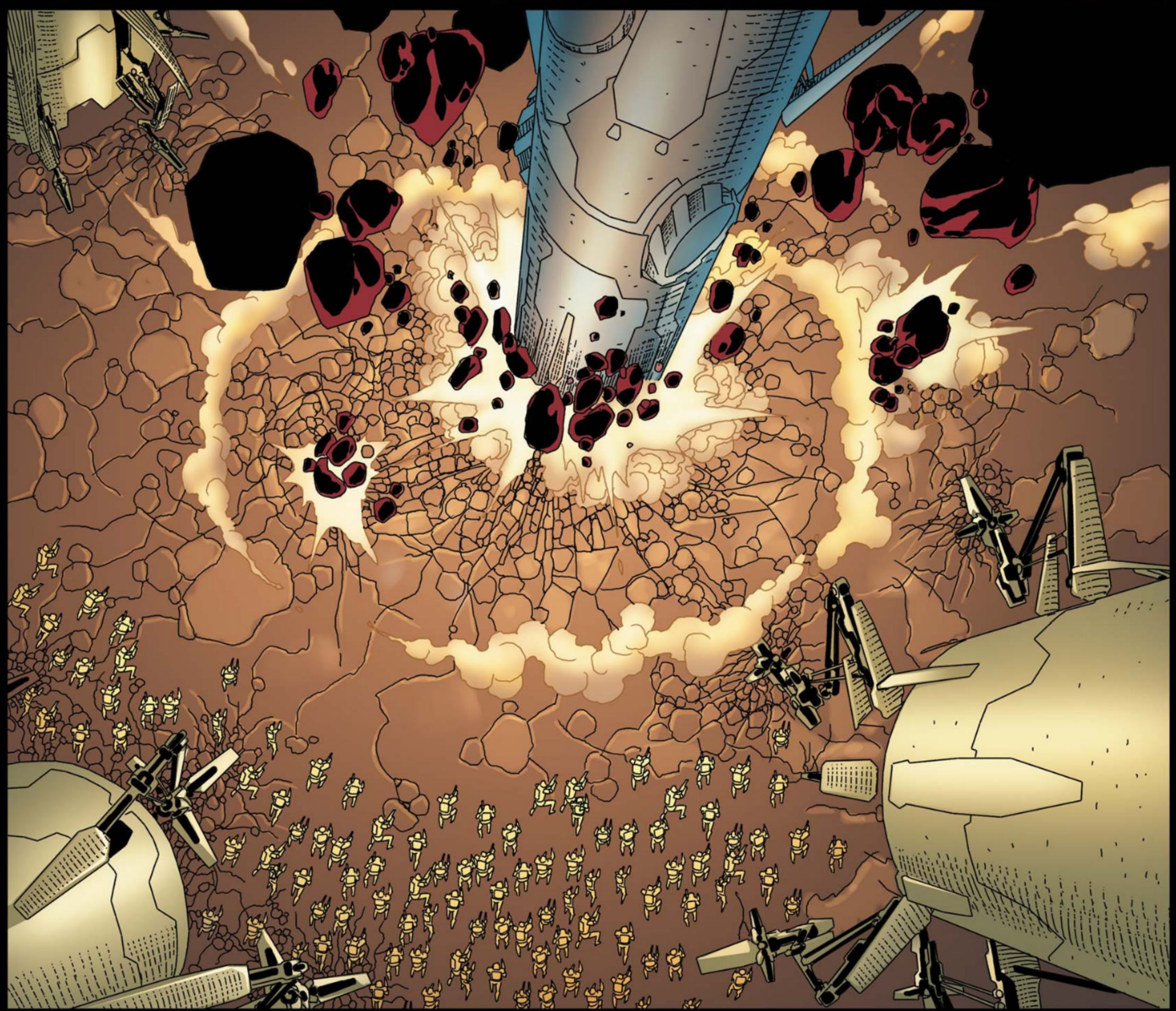

NOW, WHEN IS THE NEXT ATTACK AGAINST THE ORE BARONS?
BLEEP!
OF COURSE...

"...AS SOON AS WE GET ABOARD."
The Shu-Torun Loyalist/ Imperial Delving Fleet.
WE MUST BE CAREFUL ON THE APPROACH TO BARON RUBIX'S DELVING-CITADEL...
THERE ARE ENTIRE SEAMS OF DANGEROUS SHU-TORUN ORES...
THE QUEEN'S PALATIAL DRILL WILL REMAIN IN THE SECOND WAVE.
SHE CAN OBSERVE THE FINAL TRIUMPH.
THIS IS THE LAST BATTLE.
THERE WILL BE MUCH TO OBSERVE...

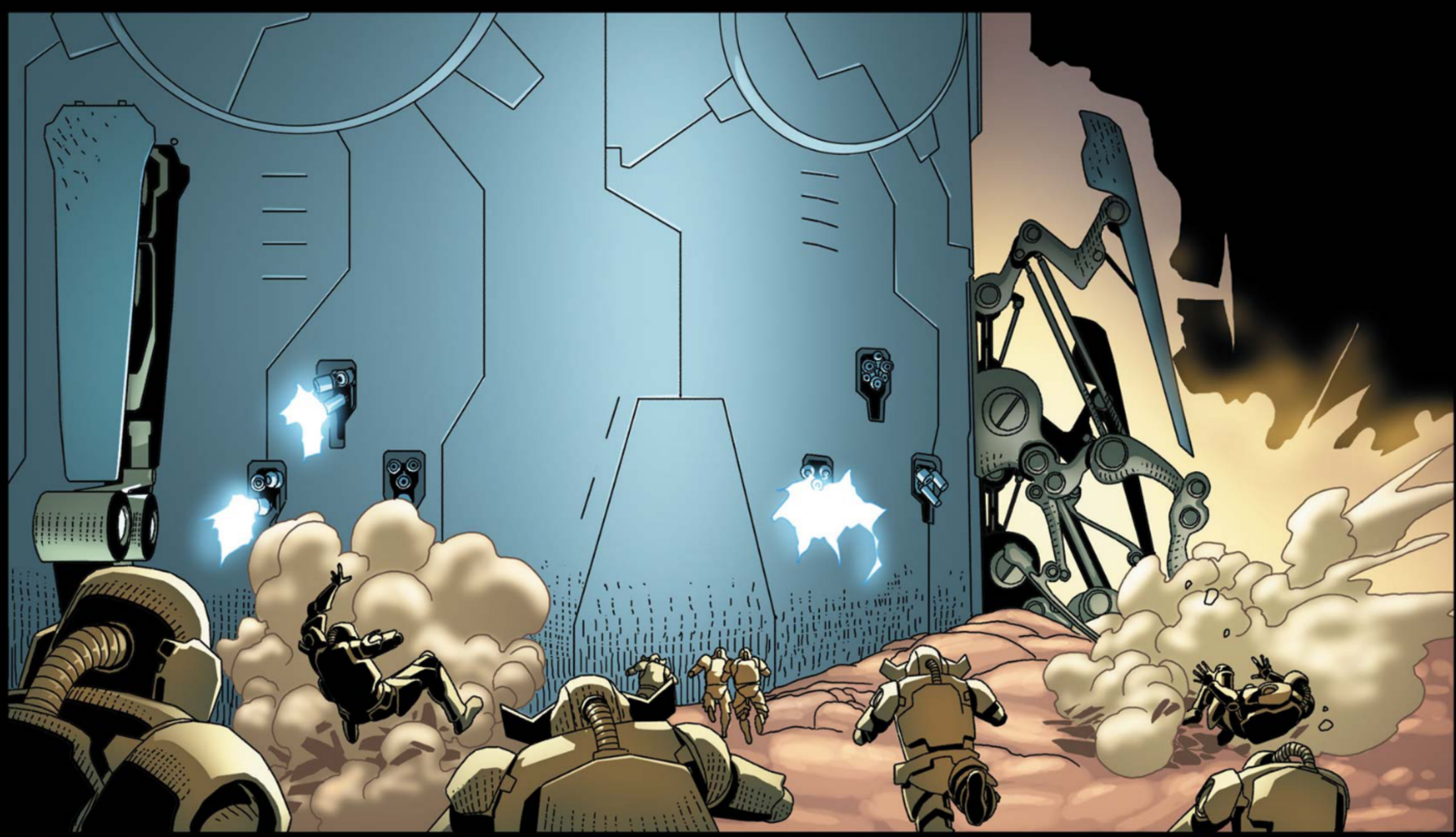
THE RUBIX STRONGHOLD WILL BE TAKEN BY DIRECT, OVERWHELMING FORCE.
OUR TIMING MUST BE PERFECT. FAILURE IS UNACCEPTABLE.
STRIKE ONLY ON MY COMMAND.
LORD VADER! THE CONTROLS HAVE FAILED.
WE'RE LISTING OFF ROUTE.

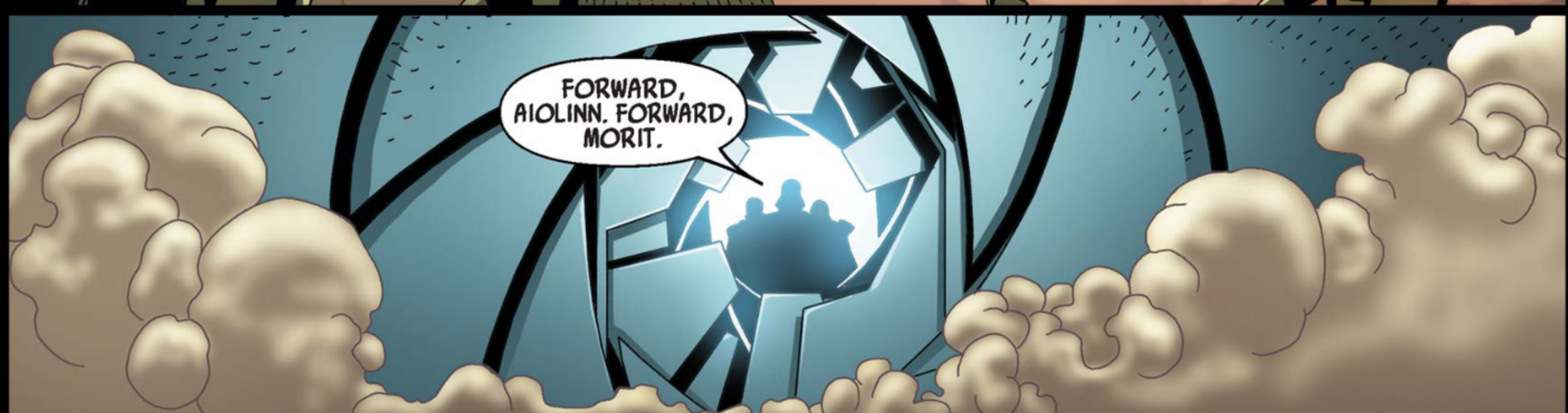
LORD VADER! WHAT HAPPENED?
HE VEERED OFF COURSE INTO THE LITHOPOROITE SEAM, QUEEN TRIOS.
THAT'LL NEVER SUPPORT A COMBAT DRILL. HE'LL HAVE DROPPED ALL THE WAY INTO THE LOWER MANTLE.
WE'VE LOST HIM.


WE'VE HIT SOLID ROCK. GYROSCOPES HAVE LEVELED THE FLOORS. WE'RE STABLE, BUT PROPULSION IS GONE. WE CAN'T GO ANYWHERE...
WHERE ARE WE?

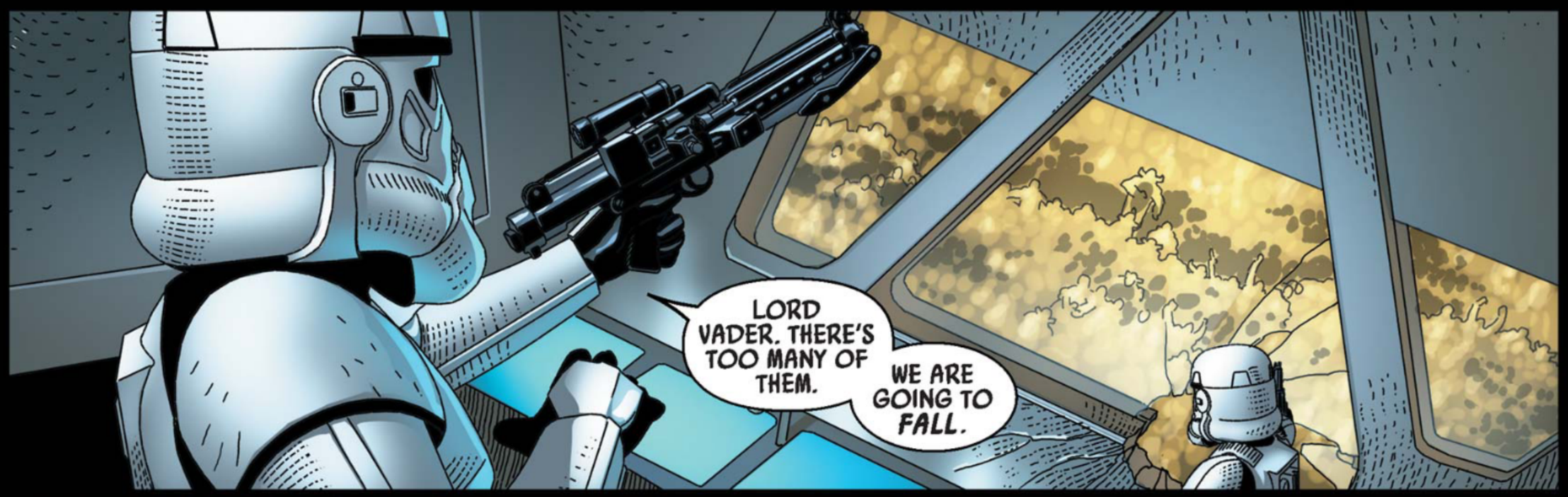


IN A TRAP.
ACTIVATE SIEGE DEFENSES. NOW.

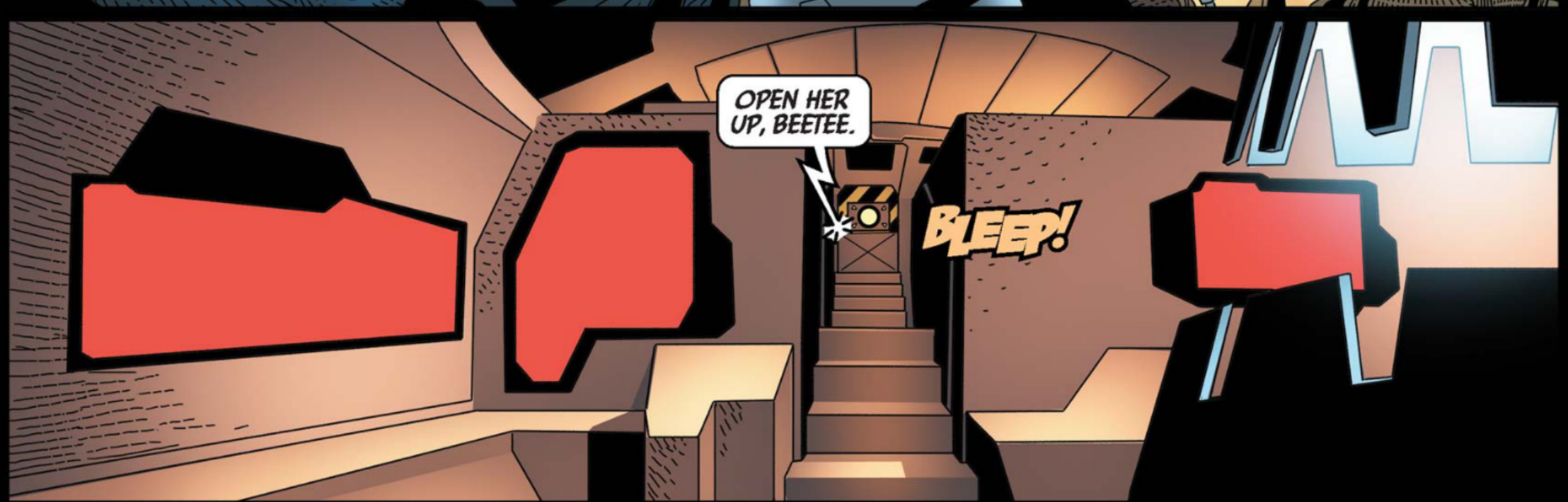


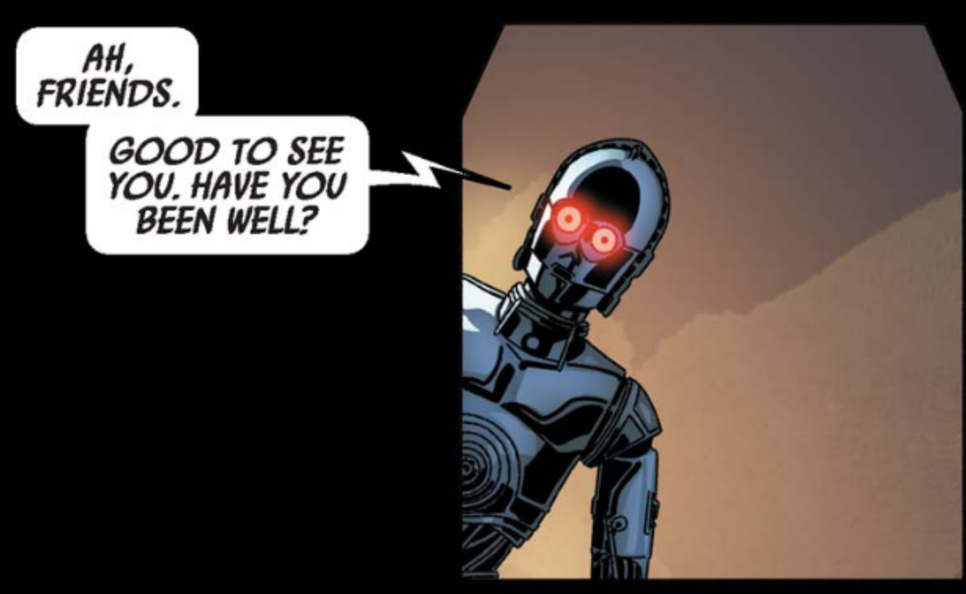

FORWARD, AIOLINN. FORWARD, MORIT.

CYLO'S EDUCATION IS OVER. NOW IS YOUR TIME OF TESTING...
FAILURE IS NOT AN OPTION.


LORD VADER. THERE'S TOO MANY OF THEM.
WE ARE GOING TO FALL.

HOLD.
HELP IS COMING.


OPEN HER UP, BEETEE.
BLEEP!


AH, FRIENDS.
GOOD TO SEE YOU. HAVE YOU BEEN WELL?

TIME FOR AN ADVENTURE!

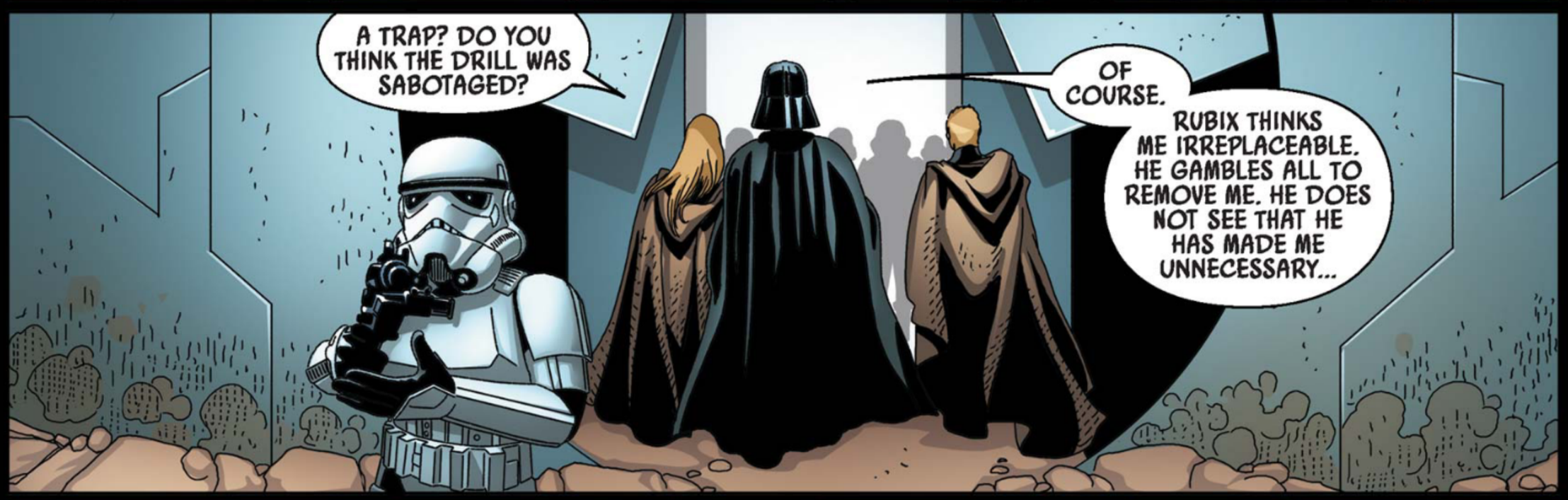
LORD VADER... WE'RE IN POSITION.

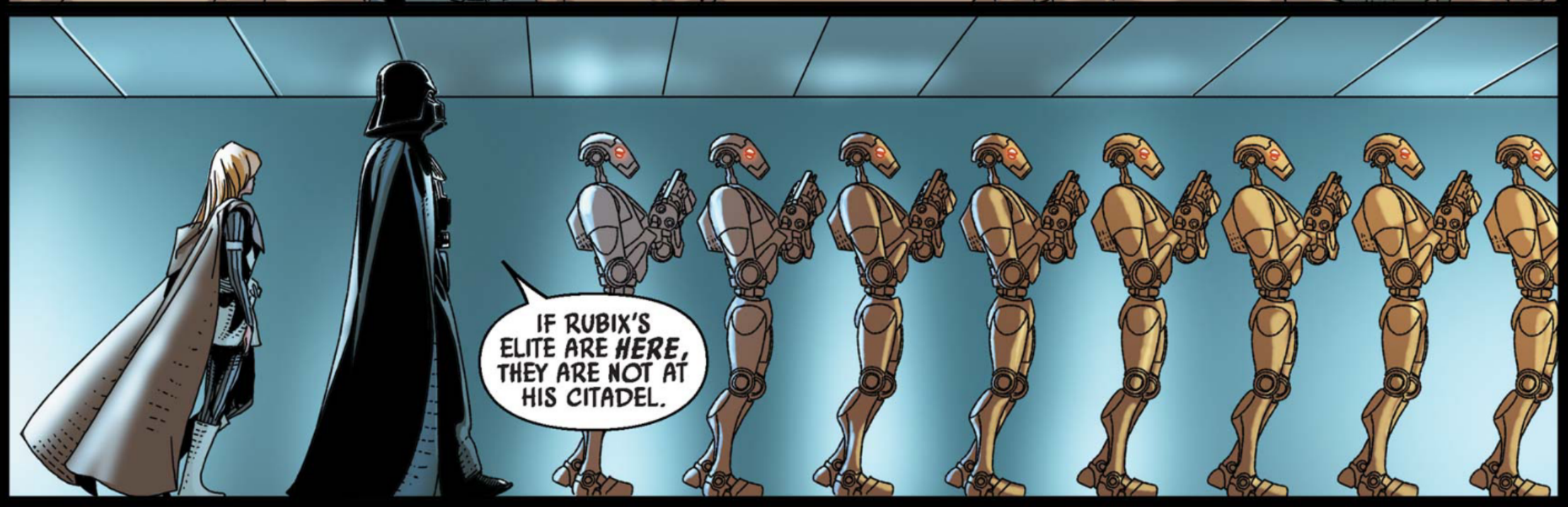
STRIKE.

OH, THE HUMANITY, BEETEE! DYING HUMANITY! THE BEST KIND!
OH, THIS REALLY IS SUCH A LOVELY WAR!

THEY'RE RETREATING. WE SHOULD PRESS OUR ADVANTAGE.
NO. IT'S A KILLING GROUND OUT THERE.
THE GIRL IS CORRECT. WE HOLD.

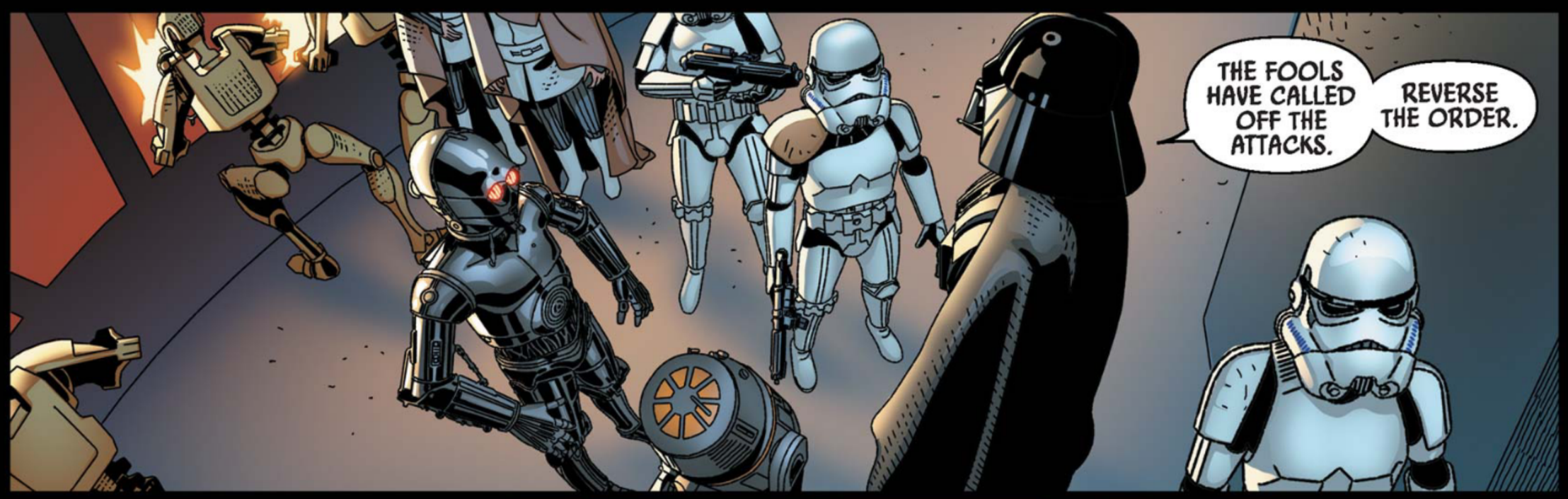
HMM.
THESE ARE BARON RUBIX'S ELITE. HE HAS GAMBLED ALL IN THIS TRAP.


A TRAP? DO YOU THINK THE DRILL WAS SABOTAGED?
OF COURSE.
RUBIX THINKS ME IRREPLACEABLE. HE GAMBLES ALL TO REMOVE ME. HE DOES NOT SEE THAT HE HAS MADE ME UNNECESSARY...


IF RUBIX'S ELITE ARE *HERE*, THEY ARE NOT AT HIS CITADEL.

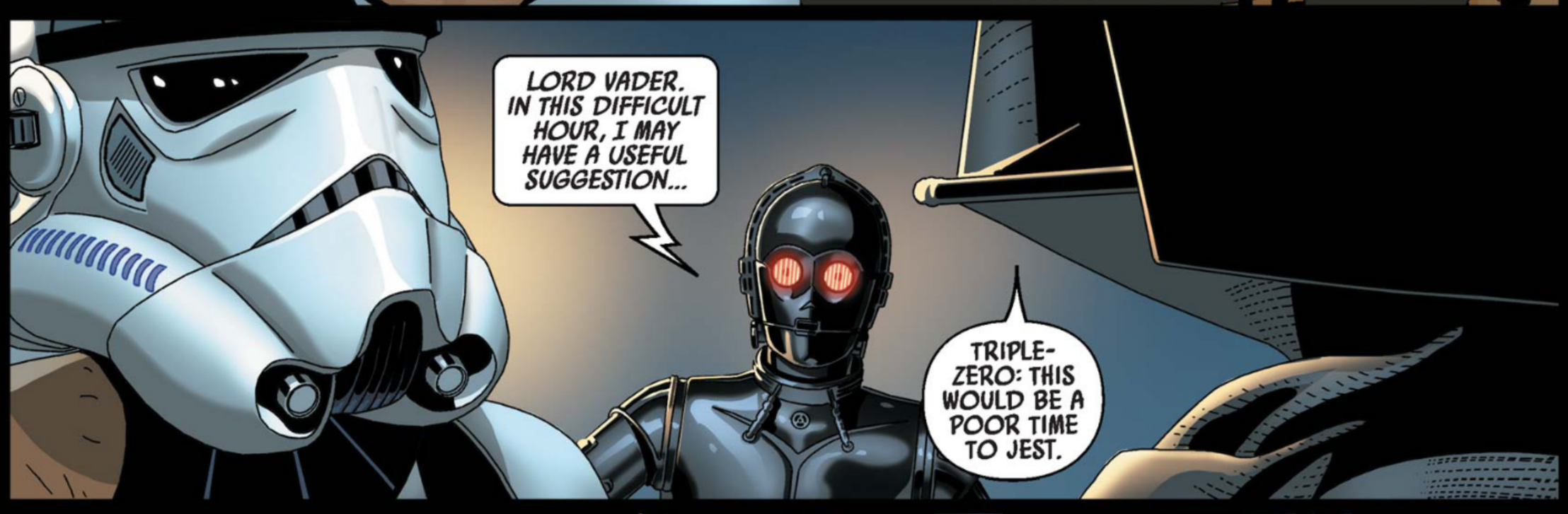
WE HAVE THE FORCE.
TRIOS NEEDS BUT STRIKE...

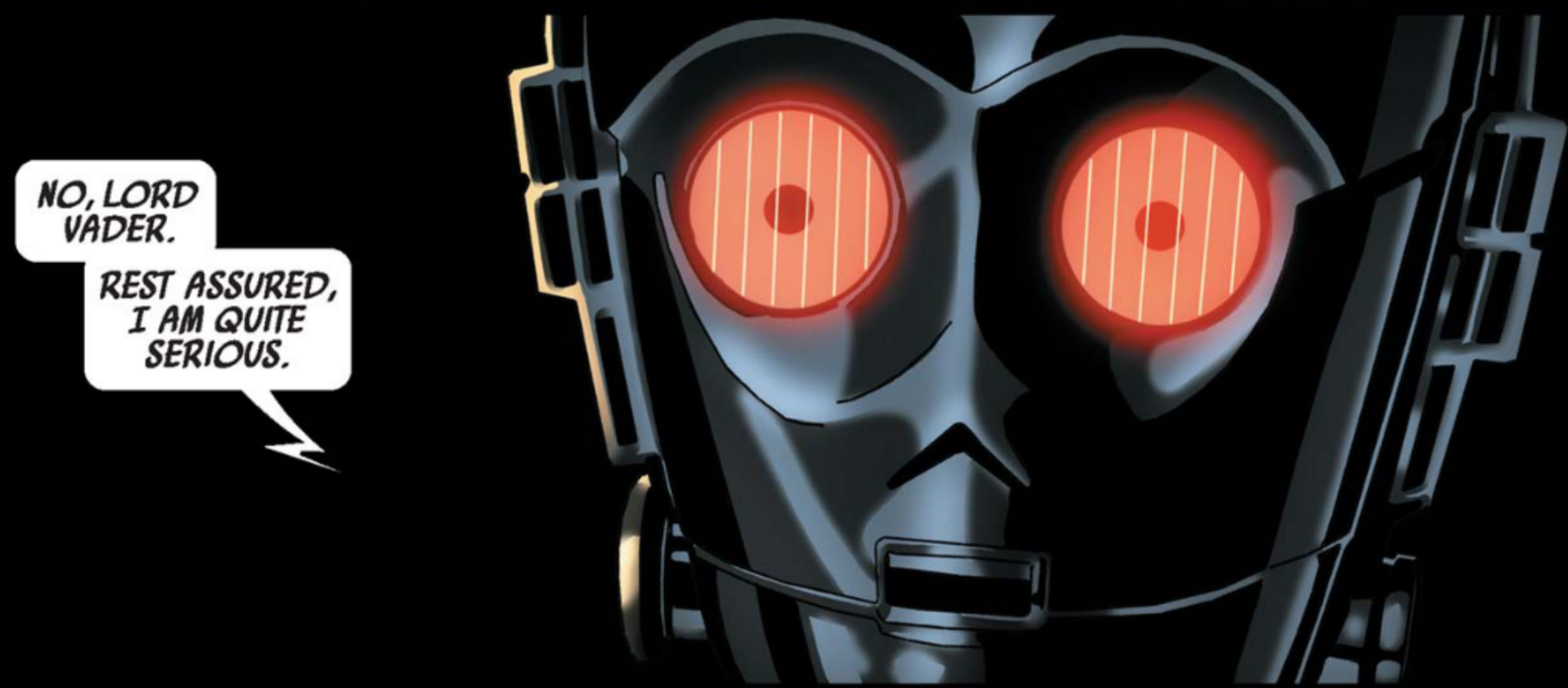
WE MUST CALL OFF THE ATTACK.
WE AWAIT VADER'S ORDER.
I AM THE QUEEN TRIOS OF SHU-TORUN!
I PROTECT THE FORGES OF THE EMPIRE!
YOU COMMAND SHU-TORUN. DO NOT THINK YOU COMMAND IMPERIAL TROOPS, YOUR MAJESTY.
VERY WELL. CHANCELLOR: WE FIGHT ALONE...
YOUR MAJESTY, AS YOU RECENTLY ASCENDED TO THE THRONE AT SUCH A TENDER AGE, I HAVE THE TRADITIONAL ADVISORY VETO ON SUCH DECISIONS...
I WILL NOT LET YOU ADVANCE WITHOUT IMPERIAL SUPPORT.


THE FOOLS HAVE CALLED OFF THE ATTACKS.
REVERSE THE ORDER.

I...I'M SORRY, LORD VADER. OUR OUTBOUND COMMS ARE BEING JAMMED.
RUBIX'S SOLDIERS' COMMUNICATIONS WILL BE OPEN. THERE ARE PASSAGES BENEATH THE BATTLEGROUND. I WILL TRAVERSE THEM AND CONTACT TRIOS.
YOUR MEN WILL HOLD HERE.

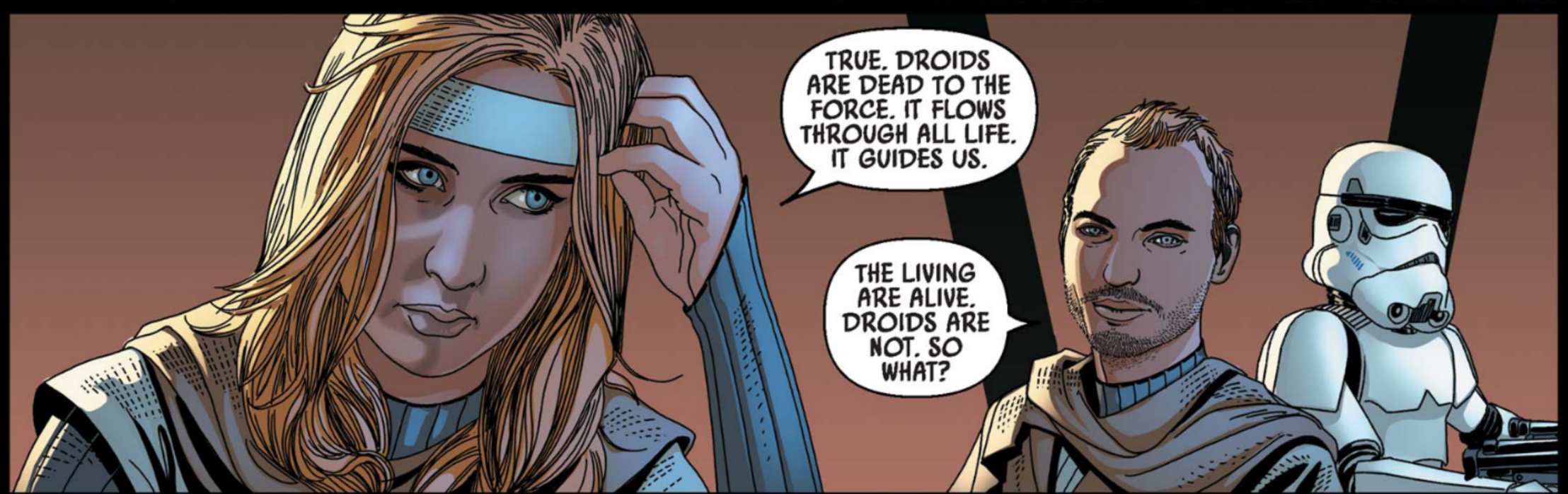
WE CAN'T HOLD, LORD VADER.
WE HAVEN'T THE MANPOWER. EVEN THE DROIDS WON'T BE ENOUGH...

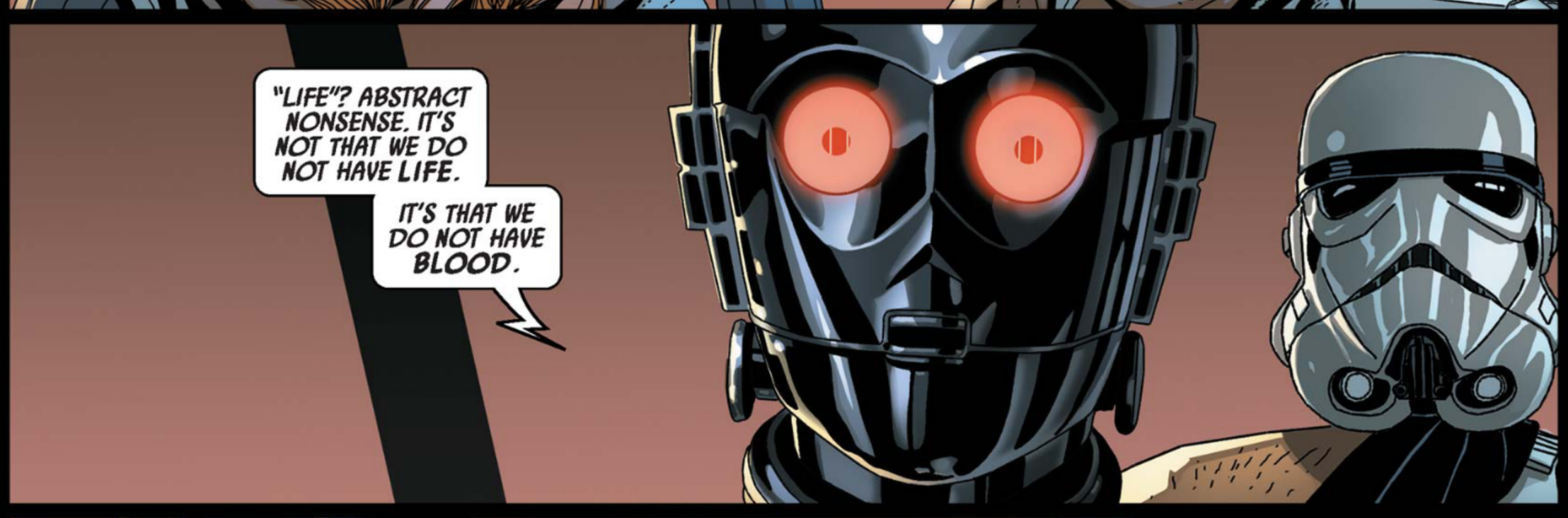

LORD VADER. IN THIS DIFFICULT HOUR, I MAY HAVE A USEFUL SUGGESTION...
TRIPLE-ZERO: THIS WOULD BE A POOR TIME TO JEST.

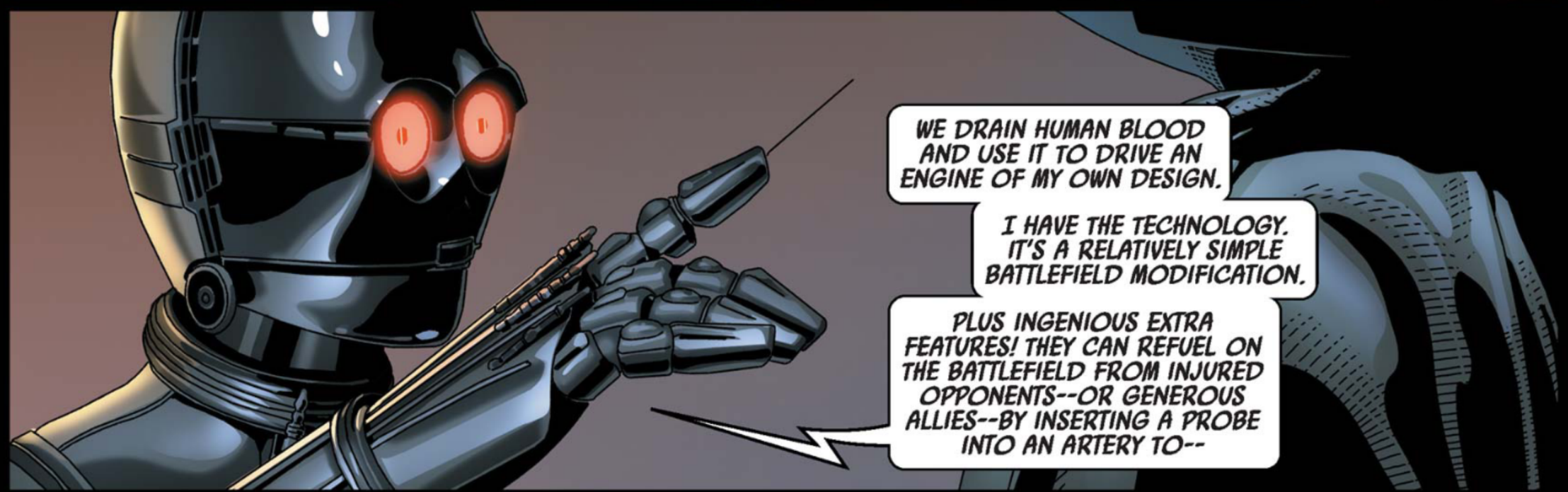

NO, LORD VADER.
REST ASSURED, I AM QUITE SERIOUS.

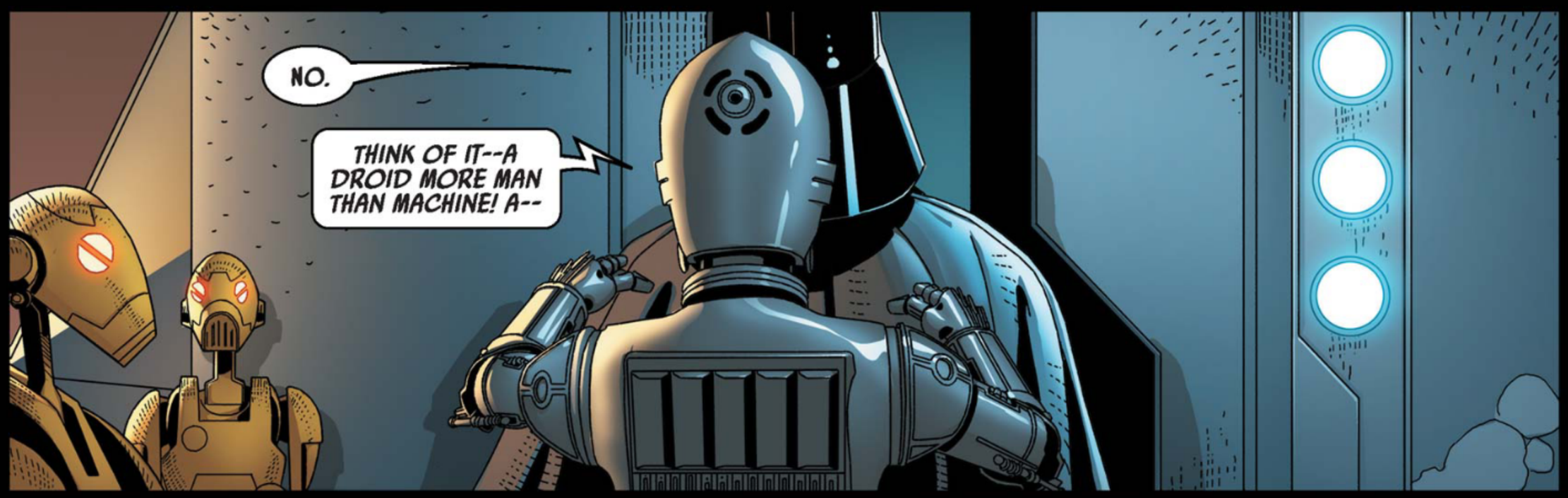
THEN SPEAK.
CONSIDER THE HUMBLE DROID, LORD VADER, AND ITS MANY ADMIRABLE ATTRIBUTES...
WE ARE LESS FRAGILE THAN ORGANICS. WE ARE QUICKER. WE ARE MASS PRODUCED WITH EASE.
SO...WHY DO DROIDS NOT RULE?

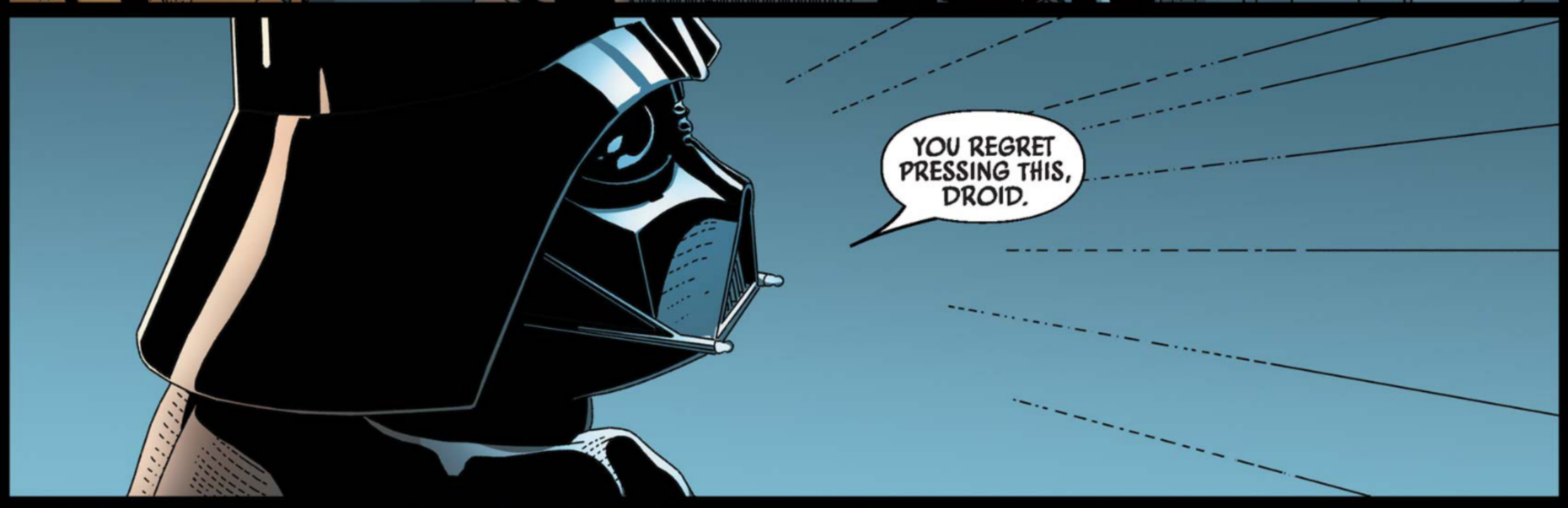
THE PROBLEM: THE FORCE IS... INDIFFERENT TO US.


TRUE. DROIDS ARE DEAD TO THE FORCE. IT FLOWS THROUGH ALL LIFE. IT GUIDES US.
THE LIVING ARE ALIVE. DROIDS ARE NOT. SO WHAT?


"LIFE"? ABSTRACT NONSENSE. IT'S NOT THAT WE DO NOT HAVE LIFE.
IT'S THAT WE DO NOT HAVE BLOOD.

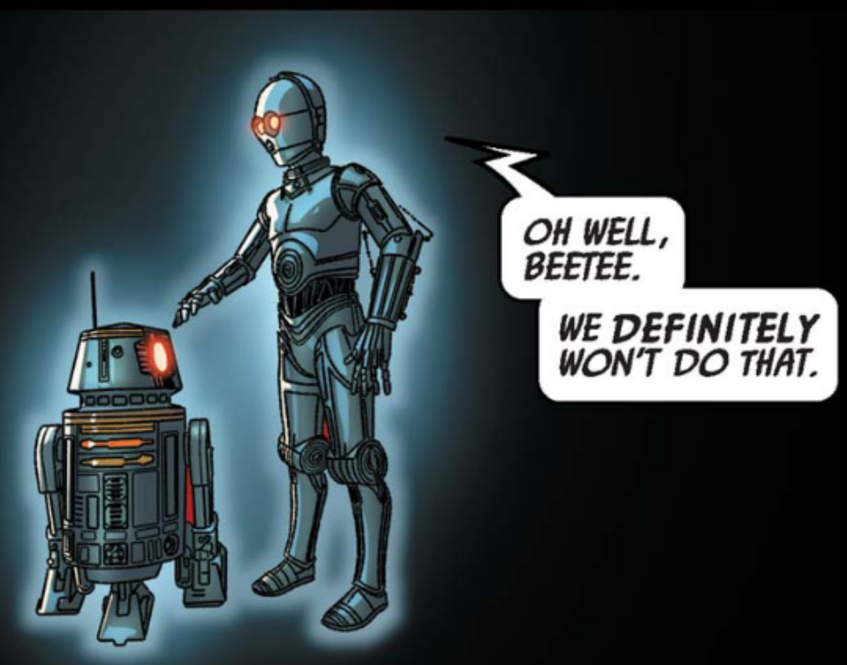

WE DRAIN HUMAN BLOOD AND USE IT TO DRIVE AN ENGINE OF MY OWN DESIGN.
I HAVE THE TECHNOLOGY. IT'S A RELATIVELY SIMPLE BATTLEFIELD MODIFICATION.
PLUS INGENIOUS EXTRA FEATURES! THEY CAN REFUEL ON THE BATTLEFIELD FROM INJURED OPPONENTS--OR GENEROUS ALLIES--BY INSERTING A PROBE INTO AN ARTERY TO--


NO.
THINK OF IT--A DROID MORE MAN THAN MACHINE! A--


YOU REGRET PRESSING THIS, DROID.

YOU WILL HOLD. YOU ARE AFRAID OF RUBIX'S FORCES?
BE MORE AFRAID OF ME.

WITH ME, ASTARTE.


OH WELL, BEETEE.
WE DEFINITELY WON'T DO THAT.

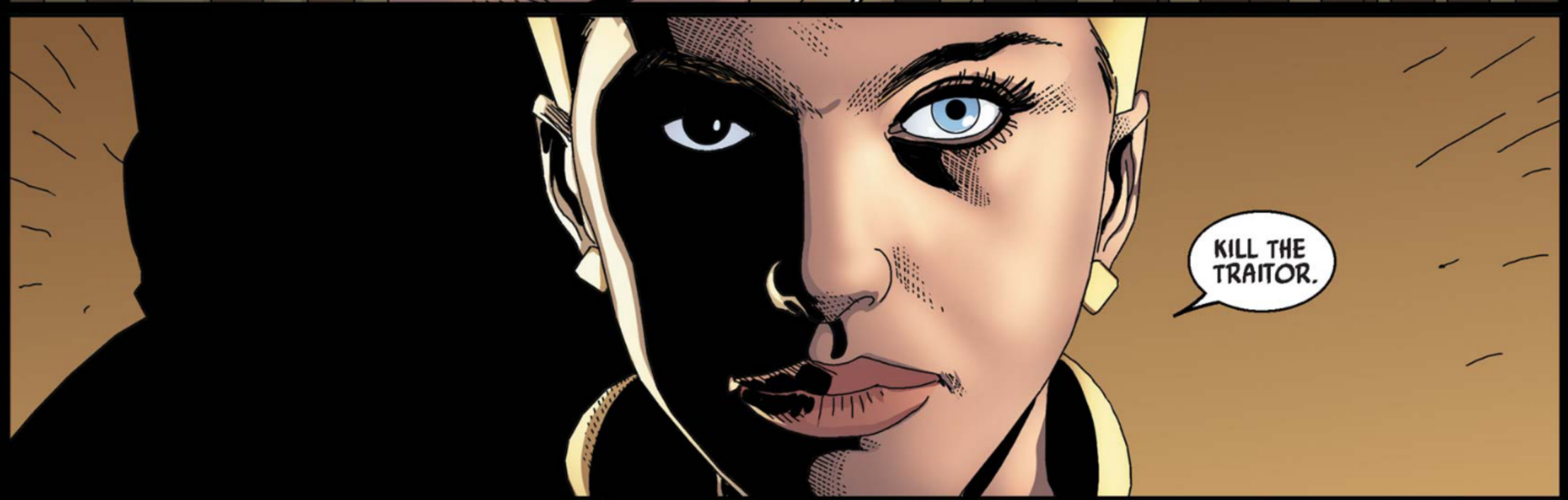
JOOLI-- YOU HAVE TO LET ME ATTACK. THIS IS AN OPPORTUNITY AND WE ARE LETTING IT SLIP AWAY!
WE MUST HAVE FAITH IN OUR POWERFUL FRIENDS.
IF FAITH IS ALL YOU HAVE, IT'S LUCKY THAT I'M HERE TO HOLD YOUR REIGNS.

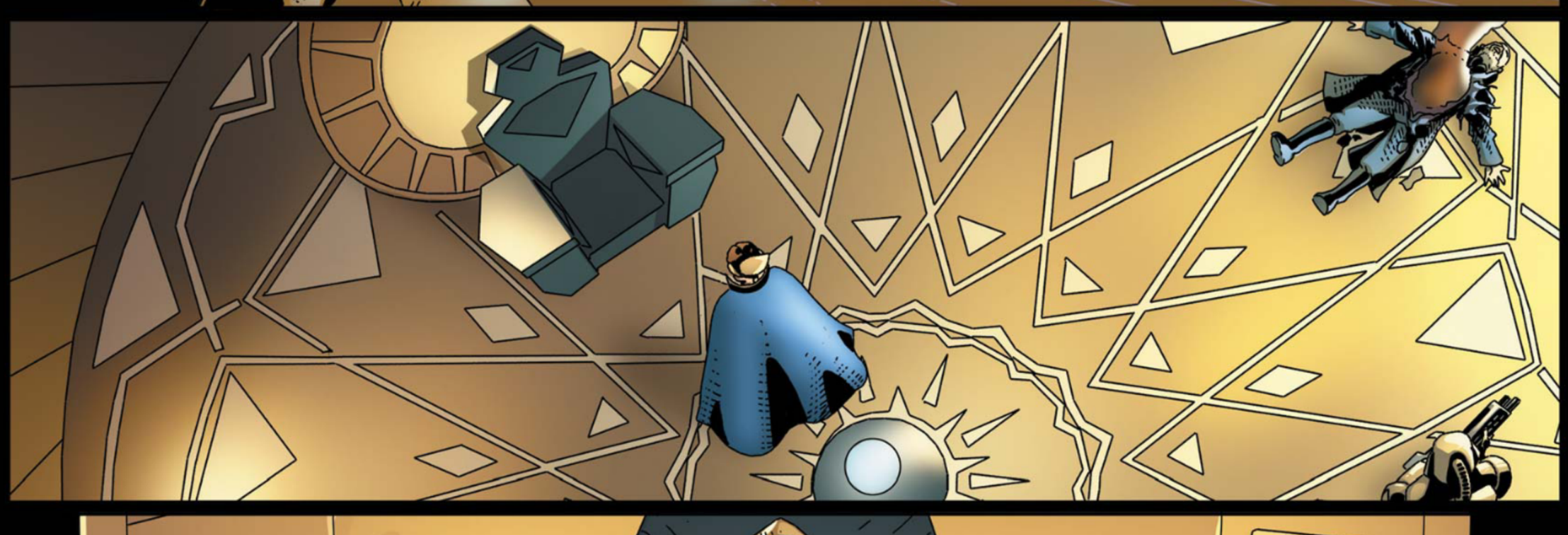
JOOLI... YOU SERVED MY FATHER FOR A LONG TIME.
I GIVE YOU A LAST CHANCE TO CHANGE YOUR MIND...

CHANCELLOR JOOLI. I HAVE BEEN SO FOR THE LAST FORTY YEARS. CONVERSELY, YOU WERE NEVER MEANT TO BE QUEEN AND SHOULD KNOW YOUR PLACE.
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO SHOOT ME.

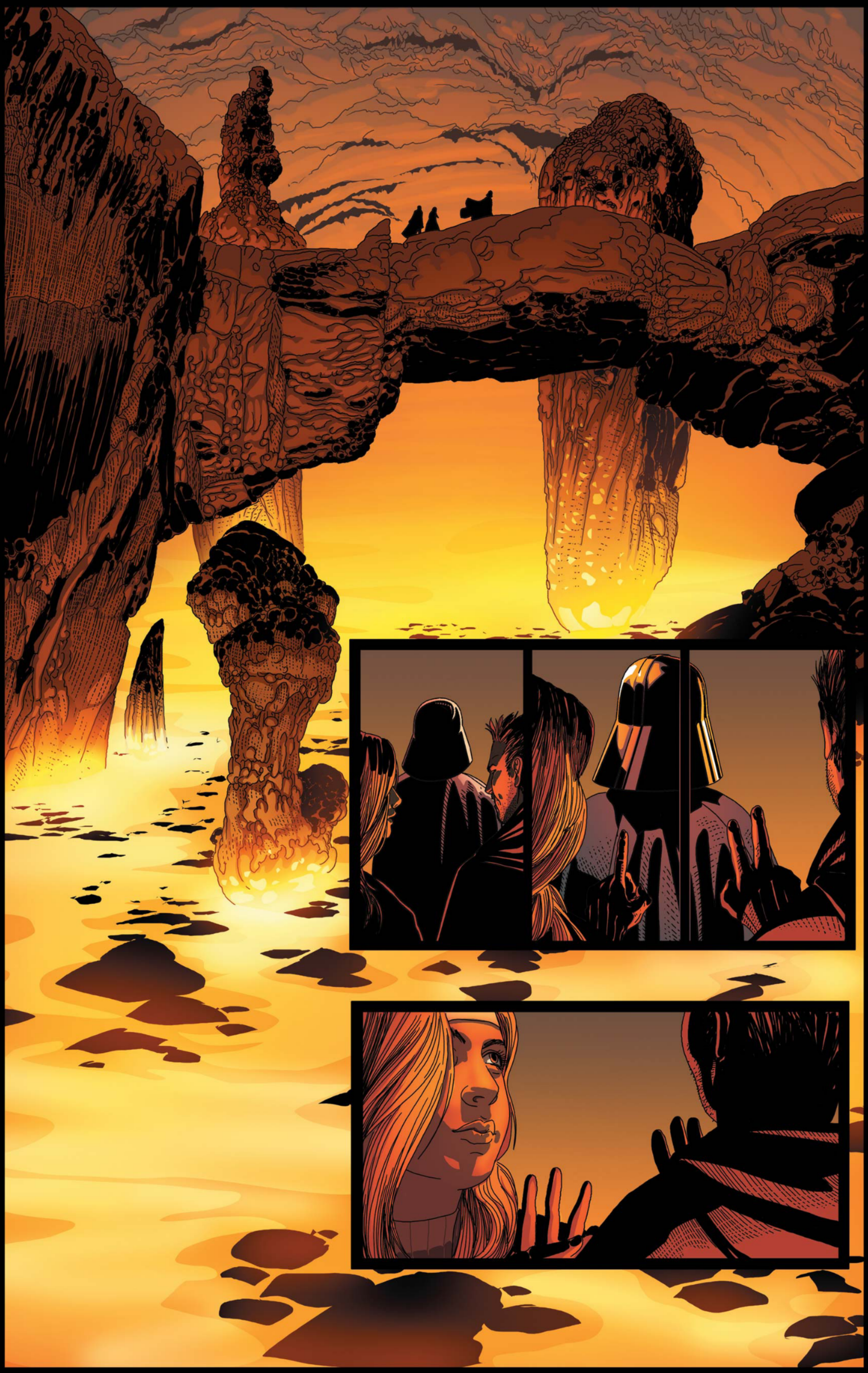
OF COURSE NOT.

I'M QUEEN NOW.
I HAVE PEOPLE TO SHOOT FOR ME.


KILL THE TRAITOR.



TO WAR.



I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU TRUSTED US.
IF I TRUSTED YOU, I'D HAVE LEFT YOU AT THE SIEGE.
INSTEAD, I TESTED YOUR CHARACTER.

YOU FAILED.